

BOROUGH OF CHARD.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE YEAR 1920.

To the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the Borough of Chard.

GENTLEMEN—

I have the honour of submitting for your perusal my sixth annual report.

These records being chiefly statistical have a tendency to become stereotype and uninteresting unless there is some occurrence of outstanding interest to give zest and distinction. As the work for the past year has been mainly routine, I fear my statement must partake of the former class.

The two salient features of my report are (1) Housing Accommodation, and (2) Water Supply. It is to be regretted that the clamant need for houses still remains *in statu quo*.

Apart from the inconvenience which accrues from limited accommodation, there arises for our consideration the more important question of morality and sanitation. If an inhabitant is imperfectly housed we must expect as a consequence a moral and physical impairment of that individual to avert which surely is our bounden duty. I surmise that there have been special difficulties to cause this delay, but other towns and districts similarly handicapped have succeeded in at least mitigating the conditions, and I trust that our town will not for long lag behind.

The Water Supply is an older problem. That it has been under review from thirty to forty years gives us some hope of action in the near future. The main supply is far from being satisfactory, and drastic change is imperative. The monthly examination of water from the general collecting chamber has frequently shown evidence of bacterial contamination. As a precautionary measure the water is chlorinated, but the plant provided is of an emergency nature and open to criticism.

The accessory supplies are from shallow wells and open streams, and in the latter cases particularly it is almost essential to have the water boiled, a proceeding requiring too much prudence and industry on the part of the users to be satisfactory.

I hope that your efforts to obtain a good and abundant supply for all the town will soon meet with success.

The birth and death rates for the town were very satisfactory, the former high, the latter low, the statistics equalling those of pre-war returns but with a reduced infantile mortality.

The general health of the community has been fair, although we had an epidemic of measles after a practical absence of it for nine years. There were no deaths from it in the Borough, perhaps owing to its comparative mildness, but also from its occurring in the good weather of May and June, when the necessary rest in bed was combined with a greater abundance of fresh air.

The number of notifiable infectious diseases was about the average, except for scarlet fever, in which, owing to the mild nature of the disease, there was the probability of a sick child attending school, &c., and spreading infection.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to Mr. Hearn for valuable help accorded me during his tenure of office, and my regret at his resignation.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,

ROBERT SUTHERLAND, M.B., Ch.B.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health
for the year ending December 31st, 1920.

POPULATION.—The Chard Borough had a population of 4568 at the 1911 census, but the General Register Office, Somerset House, estimates the 1920 population at 4113.

SANITARY STAFF.—Two part time officers viz.—the Medical Officer of Health and the Inspector of Nuisances.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

BIRTHS.—The number of births registered were 84, which gives a birth rate of 20.42 per 1,000 population.

[There were 4 deaths under 12 months of age, giving an infant mortality of 47.6 per 1,000 births. Of these deaths two occurred between 1 and 4 weeks of age, the other two being between 1 and 6 months. The former two were caused by digestive disorders, the latter two by bronchitis and whooping cough respectively.]

DEATHS (general).—The total registered were 56, but when corrected for inward and outward transfers, the net number is 48, giving a death rate of 11.67.

CAUSES OF DEATH.

(CIVILIANS ONLY.)

	MALES.	FEMALES.
All Causes	20	28
Whooping cough	—	1
Influenza	1	—
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	1	1
Cancer, malignant disease	2	6
Rheumatic fever	1	—
Organic heart disease	—	5
Bronchitis	2	—
Other respiratory diseases	1	—
Nephritis and Bright's disease	—	2
Congenital Debility	1	—
Violence, apart from suicide	3	—
Suicide	—	1
Other defined diseases	8	7
Deaths of infants under 1 year of age. Total	3	1
Illegitimate	—	—
Total births...	44	40
Legitimate	43	36
Illegitimate	1	4
Population (for births and deaths) 4113		

Of the 48 deaths more than half occurred at 60 or over, about a quarter passed 70, and an eighth part of them were over 80 years of age.

The deaths from tuberculosis are happily fewer, but it would be unwise to argue much from one year's record.

The chief causes of death were from cancer (8) and bronchitis (7), which are common in advanced years.

NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES.—

	Cases notified.	Deaths.	Remarks.
Diphtheria	7	0	
Scarlet fever	16	0	
Dysentery	1	0	{ Removed to Taunton Military Hospital.
Malaria	6	0	{ All contracted abroad.
Acute Primary			{ Occurred in an outside case admitted to the Union Infirmary.
Pneumonia	4	1	
Acute Influenza			
Pneumonia	1	1	
Pulmonary			
Tuberculosis	12	2	

The Diphtheria was partially a legacy from the previous year, and three of the cases occurred in one over-crowded house. The scarlet fever was of a mild character, mainly associated with the Holyrood Street schools, but its very mildness made it difficult to check its spread. I visited the school on one occasion and carefully inspected each member of the suspected classes, but with negative results. The school teachers also kept a sharp watch for any suspicious case.

A hospital for the isolation of cases of small pox, should any arise, is maintained jointly by the Chard Borough and Chard Rural District Councils. There is no other isolation hospital.

OPHTHALMIA NEONATORUM.—No special arrangements have been made for possible cases of this disease beyond the usual medicine and nursing facilities of the town, but a severe case would if need arose be admitted to the Local Cottage Hospital.

This institution, opened in September, 1910, has proved very useful to the town and neighbourhood and is working very satisfactorily.

The Maternity and Child Welfare arrangements continue to work well and promote a higher standard of health among the mothers and infants.

GENERAL SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

a. **DRainAGE AND SEWERAGE.** There has been no big alteration. Various inspections have been made re these by the Sanitary Inspector on 145 occasions.

Informal notices to remedy defects have been served on 4 occasions, and these have all been remedied.

Four tests of old drains were made and twelve new or additional drainage systems have been constructed.

b. There is no river pollution.

c. The water supply remains as it was in 1919. The public supply is very limited, shows a most constant evidence of contamination with impurity before arrival at the main collecting chamber, and hence chlorination of it has been steadily continued.

Five informal notices to protect private, or semi-private water supplies have been served, and all five have been complied with.

(d). Scavenging continues as given in my 1919 report.

(e). Fifteen inspections of Factories and Workshops were made.

MILK SUPPLY.—As given in my 1919 report.

MEAT INSPECTION.—There are three licensed slaughter houses and one registered. Regular inspection of slaughtered beasts is practically impossible.

A consignment of foreign frozen meat which had been badly neglected after removal from cold storage was found to be in bad condition upon arrival at Chard (Jun. 15th, 1920), and 1623 lbs. of beef, with 343 lbs. of lamb, were condemned and destroyed.

SANITARY INSPECTIONS.

Housing Inspections	...	..	...	4
Refuse Disposal	...	..	..	2
Drainage	...	..	..	145
Infectious Disease	...	..	..	53
Water Supply	...	..	..	10
Unsound Meat	...	..	..	10
General	...	..	..	16
Slaughter Houses	...	..	..	8
Factories and Workshops	...	..	..	15
Cowsheds and Dairies	...	..	..	7

270

HOUSING.

Number of dwelling houses of all classes 1093

Number of working-class dwelling houses 745

Number of working-class dwelling houses erected

erected	...	..	..	..	0
(a). By Local Authority	..	..	..	..	0
(b). By Private Enterprise	..	..	..	..	0

New houses in hand but not erected :—

(a). Plans passed only	..	..	..	..	0
(b). Building commenced but not completed	..	..	..	..	4

INSPECTION.

Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts) 4

Number of dwelling-houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District Regulation, 1910) 0

Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation 1

Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-heading) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation 0

ACTION.

Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers 4

A. Proceedings under section 28 of the Housing Town Planning &c. Act 1919.

Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs 0

Number of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit :—

(a). by owners 0

(b). by Local Authority 0

Number of dwelling-houses of which closing orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close 0

B. Proceedings under Public Health Acts.

Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied :—

(a). by owners 0

(b). by Local Authority in default of owners 0

c. Proceedings under sections 17 and 18 of the Housing Town Planning &c. Act, 1909.

Number of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders 0

Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made 0

Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the dwelling-houses having been rendered fit 3

Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made 0

Any unhealthy areas represented 0

GENERAL HOUSING CONDITIONS in the district :—
—As given in report for 1919.

OVERCROWDING (Extent, causes, measures taken)
As in 1919 Report.—It is estimated that there are 47 houses with more than 2 occupants per room, and 21 houses with more than one family inhabiting.

ANY OTHER REMARKS ON HOUSING.

No action was taken under the Housing Acts owing to the acute shortage of houses.

A scheme for the purchase, erection and conversion of 20 army huts had to be abandoned owing to the excessive cost.

Further progress made with the permanent Housing Scheme :—

The first part of the scheme is for 24 houses to be built on the North end of the Old Town Farm site. The lay-out and house-plans were formally approved by the Housing Commissioner. Tenders were advertised for and one tender, received from the Chard Master Builders' Federation in September, proved to be prohibitive in price.

A second advertisement was issued in Jan., 1921, and there is every hope that one of the two tenders received will be acceptable and an early start made.

Chard, May, 1921.